

**AMHERST REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MINUTES
October 27, 2010**

LOCATION: Room 1010, Bangs Community Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Coull, Aaron Hayden, Lawrence Kelley, Margaret Roberts, Jeanne Traester.

OTHERS PRESENT: L. Michael Alpert, Joan Burgess, Winnifred Manning, Elissa Rubinstein, Judy Seacrest, Donna Van Boom, Walter Wolnik, [UMass officials) Dennis Swinford (UMass Director of Campus Planning), Todd Diacon (Deputy Chancellor), Nanncy Buffone,

STAFF PRESENT: Jonathan Tucker (Planning Director).

Mr. Coull called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Announcements

Mr. Coull provided his email address to the neighbors present. He announced that there would be a kick-off meeting of Amherst Future, a new community organization, on November 4, at 5:30 p.m. at the Grace Episcopal Church Parish Hall.

Executive Session – None.

Minutes

After discussion, Mr. Hayden MOVED: to approve the minutes of August 11 as amended. Mr. Kelley seconded, and the motion passed 4-0-1 (Ms. Traester abstaining).

Mr. Kelley MOVED: to approve the minutes of August 25. Mr. Hayden seconded, and the motion passed 4-0-1 (Ms. Traester abstaining).

Old Business

Gateway Corridor Maps & Project Goals Summary

Mr. Hayden said he appreciated the general definition of the project are provided by the maps, saying they would provide clarity for the consultant. Mrs. Roberts asked if the ARA should provide more information on what the “Neighborhood Planning Areas” meant. Mr. Tucker said they represented neighborhood areas immediately adjacent to the corridor which might be impacted by development of the corridor. Mr. Coull said the language should be kept as it is—that the project areas was not yet defined, and in some cases, it might be appropriate to consider these areas in terms of dealing with traffic flow and other issues. The neighborhoods were not necessarily barriers. The Authority should think about where it wanted traffic to go. He mentioned UMass’ use of vending carts in the parking lots south of the visitors’ center as an attempt to draw Southwest students north and away from the Fearing Street neighborhood.

Mrs. Roberts asked if there should be mention of transition areas at the edges of the project in the summary. Mr. Coull indicated where that was already mentioned in the existing text. Mr. Hayden said the existing language did not limit the Authority. He asked if the term “blighted” should be used in a non-technical context in the summary. After discussion, it was agreed that the term would be replaced with the phrase, “an under-utilized corridor.”

After further discussion, Mr. Kelley MOVED: to approve the maps and summary statement as amended. Mr. Hayden seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Other Old Business

Mr. Hayden said that the Authority should look at Saratoga Springs, NY, as a potential model. His daughter was attending Skidmore College there. Mr. Coull said that Saratoga Springs had come up before as a potential model. Mrs. Roberts asked that staff look at what was available online. Mr. Coull also asked staff to contact Saratoga Springs’ planners and talk to the UMass planners about it as well.

Mr. Coull asked staff to update the ARA’s webpage with the newly-approved materials. He asked the ARA members to consider whether it would be worthwhile to use its budget to supplement one of the planner’s positions and obtain further staff support thereby.

Mrs. Roberts asked for materials from a recent conference on urban renewal planning.

Mr. Tucker noted that state economic development grant programs were being unified. Mrs. Roberts reminded the ARA members that planning for this project would be expensive.

New Business

Upcoming Zoning Amendments – Mr. Tucker summarized Article 8, Development Modification, for the Authority. After discussion, it was determined that the Authority would take no position on proposed zoning amendments.

Next Meetings

The Authority set the following upcoming meetings:

November – 4, 16
December – 9, 16.

Public Questions & Comments

Ms. Judy Seacrest pointed out that the properties south of Fearing Street were all privately owned.

Mrs. Roberts asked that the Director of Campus Housing be invited to an upcoming meeting. Mr. Coull discussed whether or not site visits with UMass housing officials should be operated as private site visits or as public meetings.

Mr. Wolnik recommended that a map of the proposed Business Improvement District (BID), whose extent included the Gateway corridor, be made available to the consultant. He asked if the ARA had access to the UMass Plan. Mr. Hayden replied that the Town Manager was inquiring about the Plan.

L. Michael Alpert said that traffic flow was important. With the removal of the old graduate student housing complex at the end of Butterfield Terrace, there were positive changes already occurring. He wondered if a roundabout would be useful at the intersection of North Pleasant and Massachusetts Avenue.

Ms. Rubinstein asked for a definition of the “Neighborhood Planning Area” on the Gateway Corridor map. Mr. Tucker said it meant just that—a neighborhood area to be included in the planning for the Corridor. He described the range of possibility as including everything from new construction in some of those areas to a strong focus on preservation and protection of existing neighborhood character.

Mr. Hayden said it made sure that the consultant would know to consider the impacts of the corridor on those areas. Ms. Traester added that it would ensure the consultant analyzed those areas.

Ms. Rubinstein said a definition was needed to make sure the consultant understood the limits in those areas. Ms. Winnifred Manning agreed, saying that the consultant needed to understand the character of the neighborhood—it was an existing single family neighborhood. Mr. Tucker said that the consultant would indeed need to know all that going in.

Mr. Coull said he wasn’t sure it served any purpose to open up the map titles to wordsmithing. The notion of changing the title to “Neighborhood Impact Area” was discussed.

Mr. Hayden said the Authority appreciated the comments. He moved to change the title to “Neighborhood Impact Area,” and Mrs. Roberts seconded. The motion failed, 1-4.

Ms. Traester suggested just “Neighborhood Area.” There was further discussion. It was determined by consensus that no change would be made.

Ms. Joan Burgess asked for more recent minutes. She cited the UMass/Town/ARA Agreement as having the phrase “includes private student housing.” She argued that the Agreement should be revisited and made more explicit in terms of not including undergraduate student housing.

Ms. Rubinstein said that Skidmore College was quite small and so not applicable to Amherst. The Authority should look for large universities that have developed something. Mr. Tucker replied that UMass/Amherst and UConn/Storrs were the two biggest state universities in New England. Projects in other parts of the country operated under very different kinds of regional and local governance than did Massachusetts.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Laurence Kelley, Clerk

Approved:

John Coull, ARA Chair

List of documents available at the meeting:

- Draft minutes for August 11 and 25
- A draft of “The Amherst ‘Gateway’ Project” summary dated October 4, 2010
- Two maps – “Gateway-Connection” and “Gateway Planning Areas”
- A document entitled “Gateway Corridor Project: Citizen Concerns to Date”
- A copy of the Amherst Planning Board’s report to the fall 2010 Special Town Meeting on Article 8, Development Modification.